



# CALIFORNIA WorksWell

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## Walkin' to the Beat ...



**Listen ... can you hear it?**  
**People are talking. News of the 3rd Annual State Employee American Heart Walk and Health Fair on September 4th at the State Capitol from 11:30 am–2:30 pm is sweeping through the Sacramento area. Don't be the last to know what the buzz is all about! Form a walk team today and join fellow employees in the fight against heart disease and stroke. Call Gina or Johnna of the AHA at 916-446-6505 for more information or to form a walk team.**



## Prevent Diabetes Problems: Keep Your Heart and Blood Vessels Healthy

**TOO MUCH SUGAR IN THE BLOOD** for a long time causes diabetes problems. This high blood sugar can damage many parts of the body, such as the heart, blood vessels, and kidneys. Diabetes problems can be scary, but there is a lot you can do to prevent them or slow them down.

Your heart and blood vessels make up your circulatory system. Your heart is a big muscle that pumps blood through your body. Your heart pumps blood carrying oxygen to large blood vessels, called arteries, and small blood vessels, called capillaries. Other blood vessels, called veins, carry blood back to the heart. So, what can damage your heart and blood vessels?

- Having high blood sugar.
- Having high blood pressure.
- Smoking cigarettes.
- Having high blood cholesterol and other abnormal blood fats.
- Eating foods full of saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Being overweight.
- Not being active.

To prevent heart and blood vessel problems, you should:

- Keep your blood sugar and blood pressure as close to normal as you can.
- Keep blood cholesterol and other blood fats as close to normal as you can.
- Take your diabetes medicines at the same times each day.
- Take your heart pills and blood pressure pills as your doctor tells you.



- Ask your doctor if you should take an aspirin each day to help protect your heart.
- Follow the healthy eating plan you work out with your doctor or dietician. Eat your meals and snacks at around the same times each day.
- Do not smoke.
- Tell your doctor right away if you think you have any signs of heart or blood vessel problems. Symptoms of heart and blood vessel problems can be shortness of breath; pain in the chest, arms, shoulder, or back; sudden loss of sight; trouble talking; or numbness or weakness in one arm or one leg. You also may feel very tired and have swollen ankles or feet.
- Be active a total of 30 minutes most days. Use stairs; park farther from the shopping center. Walk, swim, do housework, or garden. Check with your doctor to know what activities are best for you.

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- Get to a healthy weight.

### How do your blood vessels get clogged?

Several things, including having diabetes, can increase your blood cholesterol too much. Cholesterol is a substance that is made by the body and used for many important functions. It also is found in some animal foods we eat. When cholesterol is too high, the insides of large blood vessels become clogged and narrowed. This problem is called atherosclerosis.

Clogged and narrowed blood vessels make it harder for enough healthy blood to get to all parts of our bodies.

When arteries become clogged and narrowed, you may have one or more heart problems:

- **CHEST PAIN, ALSO CALLED ANGINA.** When you have angina, you feel pain in your chest, arms, shoulders, or back. You may feel the pain more when your heart works faster, such as when you exercise. The pain may go away when you rest. You also may feel very weak and sweaty. If you do not get it treated, chest pain may happen more often. If diabetes has damaged the heart nerves, you may not feel the chest pain.
- **HEART ATTACK.** A heart attack happens when a blood vessel in or near the heart becomes blocked. Not enough blood can get to that part of the heart muscle. That area of the heart muscle stops working, so the heart is weaker. During a heart attack, you may have chest pain along with nausea, indigestion, extreme weakness, and sweating.
- **CARDIOMYOPATHY.** Cardiomyopathy happens when narrowed blood vessels let less blood flow through the heart. This damage makes the heart muscle weak.

### How does heart disease cause high blood pressure?

Clogged and narrowed blood vessels leave a smaller opening for blood to flow through. It is like turning on a garden hose and holding your thumb

over the opening. The smaller opening makes the water shoot out with more pressure. In the same way, narrowed blood vessels lead to high blood pressure. Other factors, such as kidney problems and being overweight, also can lead to high blood pressure.

Diabetes and high blood pressure often go hand-in-hand. If you have heart, eye, or kidney problems from diabetes, high blood pressure can make them worse. You will see your blood pressure written with two numbers separated by a slash. For example: 120/70. Keep your first number below 130 and your second number below 85.

If you have high blood pressure, ask your doctor how to lower it. Your doctor may ask you to take an ACE inhibitor. This type of blood pressure medicine is best for people with diabetes who have kidney problems because it helps keep the kidneys healthy.

To lower your blood pressure, your doctor also may ask you to lose weight; eat more fruits and vegetables; eat less salt and high-sodium foods such as canned soups, luncheon meats, salty snack foods, and fast foods; and drink less alcohol.

### How can clogged blood vessels hurt my legs and feet?

Peripheral vascular disease can happen when the openings in your blood vessels become narrow and not enough blood gets to your legs and feet. You may feel pain in your buttocks, the back of your legs, or your thighs when you stand, walk, or exercise.

What can you do to prevent or control peripheral vascular disease?

- Don't smoke.
- Keep blood pressure under control.
- Keep blood fats close to normal.
- Exercise.

You also may need surgery to treat this problem.

### Which medical test will help me keep track of any heart or blood vessel problems?

- Have your blood pressure checked every time you see your doctor. Ask your doctor what your blood pressure is and what it should be.
- Your doctor may order an exercise stress test to see if you have any problems. The doctor will see how your heart performs during exercise.
- Have your blood fats checked once each year. This checkup includes four tests:

1. Blood cholesterol. Your number should be 200 or lower.
2. LDL (bad cholesterol). Your number should be 100 or lower.
3. HDL (good cholesterol). Your number should be 45 or higher.
4. Triglycerides (the form in which energy is stored in your fat cells). Your number should be 200 or lower.

If your numbers are not normal, ask your doctor if you should take medicine to get things under control and in the normal range.

To learn more about diabetes, call 1-800-Diabetes or check [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org). To learn more about the Department of Health Services, California Diabetes Control Program's statewide diabetes campaign, call 916-445-8732 or check [www.dhs.ca.gov/diabetes](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/diabetes).

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